

 **BEACH
GUARDIAN
PROGRAM**

Launched in 2024 by Surfrider Foundation Maine Chapter, the Beach Guardians Program empowers volunteers to be the guardian of their local beach or coastal area and learn how to collect and submit data, while cultivating a network of core volunteers to grow chapter impact.

The Beach Guardians Program supplements the work currently happening through Surfrider's many initiatives and engages volunteers without needing to attend chapter events. It is beneficial for chapters that cover a wide geographic area. It also provides volunteers the opportunity to be recognized for their contribution to the organization.

How do the Beach Guardians work?

Interested beach guardians can sign up for the role on the chapter website by filling out a form that includes their contact information and desired location. Beach guardians must be 18+, and must be able to conduct a beach cleanup on a quarterly basis. After filling out the form, interested parties will be contacted by someone from the chapter to begin an onboarding process. The onboarding process for beach guardians consists of: signing up for the program through Surfrider's Golden Opportunity platform, signing Surfrider's Volunteer Waiver, and attending an orientation. The chapter hosts in-person orientations for new beach guardians on a quarterly basis. This orientation includes discussion of goals and responsibilities, training on how to collect and input data, and training about what type of habitat/ pollution to look out for. After the orientation, the beach guardians are required to set up cleanups on either a monthly or quarterly basis, and check in with the chapter as needed. They also are required to document their cleanups by submitting data collected at cleanups as well as photographs. Additionally, the chapter hosts quarterly summits for beach guardians to connect with one another, share insight about their experience, and learn from one another. Beach guardians are required to attend at least one summit per year, and encouraged to attend all four.

Insight from 2024

Since its launch by the Maine Chapter, this program has proven to be a successful way to engage new volunteers, cover more geographic reach, and to increase their total number of beach cleanups and data collected. Since launching, the chapter has trained over 35 new Beach Guardians, with many joining other chapter meetings and events. Their overall cleanup impact has grown tremendously; in 2023, the Maine Chapter collected around 1,000 pounds of trash, whereas in 2024, they collected over 12,000. They have also been able to use the photos and habitat monitoring data to assist them in projects related to the Climate Action Program. For example, the data they collected in 2024 is informing a Dune Restoration project the chapter launched in 2025. The chapter received an innovation award for this program at the 40th Anniversary Summit, and has received recognition from local news outlets.

Vision for growth

This program is one that we believe can be replicated at the national level. To do so, we are launching a pilot program and expanding to numerous chapters across the country. This will ensure that any potential challenges associated with expansion are monitored on a smaller, targeted level.

As this program continues to grow, there will be opportunities for direct fundraising and leadership development. Interested in learning more, becoming a beach guardian, or bringing this to your chapter.

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